

EXHIBIT 41



INTERVIEW III

"I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING HALFHEARTEDLY."

Conducted by
GARY GROTH

Conducted in three sessions over the summer of 1989 at the Kirbys' home in Thousand Oaks, Calif., this interview originally appeared in *The Comics Journal* #134 (February 1990). Jack's wife, Roz, sat in on the interviews and helped recall key points in his career.

The single biggest matter of contention in the history of Marvel has always been the division of labor between Stan Lee and Jack Kirby. Originally, the official Marvel line (as seen in countless interviews with and book introductions by Lee) was that Lee conceived and wrote the material while Kirby (and other artists) co-plotted and drew it. Lee has since conceded the magnitude of Kirby's contribution to a somewhat greater degree, but as can be seen in this interview (conducted late in Kirby's career), an embittered Kirby eventually came to dismiss all of Lee's contributions to the work as literally nonexistent. Some of Kirby's more extreme statements (e.g., "I've never seen Stan Lee write anything") should be read with a grain of salt; the creation of Spider-Man, which Kirby takes full credit for here, has also been disputed by Steve Ditko in one of his extremely rare public statements. There is no doubt that Kirby's contribution to the Marvel comics he worked on was enormous; Lee's contribution is a matter for endless speculation, but most observers and historians consider Kirby's claims here to be excessive.

"Iron Visitation," 1975.

THE COMICS JOURNAL LIBRARY: JACK KIRBY

They were climb-out fights. There was a monument store. There was a store that built funeral monuments, and we used to run over these monuments. We used to hop from monument to monument chasing each other.]]

GROWING UP ON THE EAST SIDE

JACK KIRBY: I don't know where your father comes from, but where I came from, everybody was an immigrant. My people were from Europe. My family came from Austria, both my mother and my father. We lived on New York's Lower East Side. The value of money was different then. We paid \$12 rent a month, and a nickel was worth maybe the equivalent of a dollar today. It was very hard for a young man to get a nickel from his mother, but somehow you managed. When I visited New York, somebody thought it would give me a big thrill if he took me down there where I grew up, and I'd be thrilled by the sight of my humble origins, and I hated the place. I wanted to get out of there! [Laughs]

THE COMICS JOURNAL: Now this is the Lower East Side. Exactly what street?

KIRBY: It was on Suffolk Street. It was right next to Norfolk Street, and I went to school at P.S. 20.

TC: Why did you hate the place?

KIRBY: I hated the place because I ... Well, it was the atmosphere itself. It was the way people behaved. I got sick of chasing people all over rooftops and having them chase me over rooftops. I knew that there was something better, and instinct told me that it was uptown, and I'd walk every day from my block to 42nd Street where the *Daily News* was, where I could be near the *Journal*, the *Hearst*

newspapers. I'd run errands for the reporters. My boss was playing golf [in the office], and he was shooting golf balls through an upturned telephone book, see? That's the kind of job I wanted! [Laughs]

TC: Was this a poor neighborhood?

KIRBY: Where I came from, Suffolk Street? It still is, and Norfolk Street next to it still is. The whole area is extremely poor.

TC: What did your father do?

KIRBY: My father worked in a factory like everybody else's father. My parents were immigrants, and the place for all immigrants was the factories. They were the source of cheap labor. The immigrants had to make a living. They had to support their families, and they did it on very little, and so we had very little ... You know, we couldn't wear the best of clothes. I always wore turtleneck sweaters and knickers when I could get them. There were two of us, my brother and I. My brother is gone. He passed away, so I'm the only one left in the family. He was a younger brother. He was five years my junior. He was bigger. He was about 6' 1", very broad kid, and when I came out of school, I'd be jumped by all these guys, and he'd see my feet sticking out of this pile and dive in. And he'd pull me out from under this pile, and he'd whale into them.

TC: Now, when you say you were jumped and your feet were sticking out of a pile of bodies, it sounds amusing now, but I assume it wasn't amusing then.

KIRBY: It's not even amusing now that I think about it. You know, the punches were real, and the anger was real, and we'd chase each other up and down fire escapes, over rooftops, and we'd climb across clotheslines, and there were real injuries.

TC: This was a tough neighborhood.

KIRBY: This was the toughest!

TC: Can you explain what you mean by that? Were there gangs?

KIRBY: Yes, there were gangs all over the place. Some of my friends became gangsters. You became a gangster depending upon how fast you wanted a suit. Gangsters weren't the stereotypes you see in the movies. I knew the real ones, and the real ones were out for big money. The average politician was crooked. That was my ambition; to be a crooked politician. I'd see them in these restaurants, and they'd all hold these conferences. I'd see politicians who were supposed to be on opposite sides of issues all together at one table.

TC: Did this disillusion you about morality or politics in America?

KIRBY: If America gave anybody anything, it is ambition. Bad things would come out of it because some guys are in a hurry, but that doesn't mean they're evil or anything; it just means they fall into bad grace somehow.

It was hard to find work. A friend of mine was going to go out to get a job because his mother told him to get a job, so he said, "I'll go out and draw pictures and they'll pay me for them." And his mother said, "No son of mine will become an artist. You'll sit around with berries in Greenwich Village and talk to loose women." Of course, mothers were very



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conventional. Everything was very conventional. You had to have approval.

TC: There were very strict social conventions.

KIRBY: Very strict social conventions, and you adhered to it, and I think it gave you a lot of character. When a man said something, he meant it. He wasn't kidding around. There were no jokes involved. Nobody was in the mood to joke unless you hit a guy with a baseball bat.

TC: Can you describe the social context a little more? The kid gangs that were running around: Did they have their own turf? Did they run in real gangs?

KIRBY: They ran in gangs because they lived in certain places. Everybody who lived on Suffolk Street would be the Suffolk Street Gang. Everybody who lived on Norfolk Street would be the Norfolk Street Gang.

TC: Were there ethnic divisions?

KIRBY: Well, there were ethnic divisions, yes. Some gangs were Irish, some gangs were black.

TC: Why was there such violence?

KIRBY: There was violence because, first of all, there were ethnic differences and names. If you were small, they called you a runt, and you had to do something about that even if there were five other guys.

There were a lot of ethnic slurs; there had to be. And I think, in that respect, that through the fighting, through the adversity, we began to know each other. I had never seen an Irishman. I'd never seen an Italian. My family had never seen an Italian. My family came from Central Europe, see, and they saw Germans and Austrians.

You had to grow up sometime. The fellows who grew up early, they were in jeopardy. They became the cops and the crooks, and the crooks became the gangsters. The crooks became the Al Capones.

TC: Were crooked politicians and gangsters looked on with disfavor?

KIRBY: They were looked on as acceptable, but with fear. It wasn't a matter of morals. It was what they wanted, how fast they wanted it. Now, Capone ran Chicago. He ran the politicians. He ran the entire city. Yet his mother would come out and slap him around for not going to church on Sunday.

TC: Were they actually looked up to?

KIRBY: Yes, they were looked up to and feared. I think you can be looked up to out of fear just as much as you can look up to a man because of his ability or his promise. Adolf Hitler. Adolf Hitler was looked up to. He was revered almost like a God, because he was feared.

TC: Did you yourself get in a lot of fights when you were a kid?

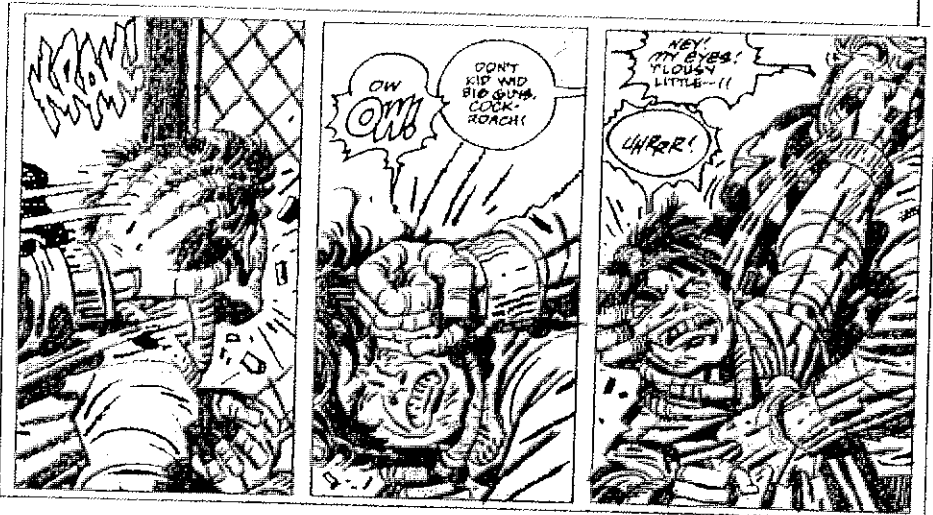
KIRBY: Yes. They were unavoidable.

ROZ KIRBY: And your brother got into a lot of fights.

KIRBY: Yes. As I said, my brother was a big kid.

TC: A tough kid?

KIRBY: He was as tough as anybody else, but he was young. My mother wanted my brother to wear nice clothes and be a big-style kid. Well, can you imagine a big-style kid with a lace collar and velvet pants and long, curly hair — blonde hair that came down to his shoulders? I'd get into fights because of my brother, and I got into fights because of his velvet pants and his lace collar, and my brother — being a younger boy — did the best he could, but I had to whale into these guys. I had to really whale into 'em, and I did. And it was a common, everyday occurrence. Fighting became second nature. I began to like it. And I love wrestling. When I went into the Army, I



took judo. Out of a class of 27, just me and another fellow graduated. There was nothing wrong with me. I loved it.

TC: Now these fights in your neighborhood — these were serious, knockdown, drag-out fights?

KIRBY: Oh yes, they were. Not only that, but they were climb-out fights. There was a monument store, a store that built funeral monuments, and we used to run over those monuments. We used to hop from monument to monument chasing each other. For all I know, they may still be on Suffolk Street.

TC: Now, what do you mean by a "climb-out fight"?

KIRBY: A climb-out fight is where you climb a building. You climb fire escapes. You climb to the top of the building. You fight on the roof, and you fight all the way down again. You fight down the wooden stairs, see? And, of course, I didn't win all of them. You fought fair. If the other guy wants to fight and you knocked him out, you did your best for him. You didn't want to hurt him any more. There was one time they knocked me out and laid me in front of my mother's door. And in order for my mother not to be shocked, they readjusted my clothes and they saw that nothing was rumpled and I looked very comfortable next to the apartment door, so when my mother would open the door it wouldn't be that much of a shock.

TC: Were you actually knocked unconscious?

KIRBY: Well, yes.

TC: Were you ever seriously injured? Broken bones, or ...

KIRBY: No, I don't think so. I was pretty good, to be frank with you, but against five guys ... you know, it didn't really faze me.

ROZ KIRBY: You were like Captain America.

KIRBY: Yes. Captain America would try to fight ten guys. I said, "How do you fight ten guys?" The fights in *Captain America* were very serious. If you looked them over, they're real fights. I'd say, "What happens to this guy while Cap fights the other four?" And I would figure it out like a ballet. It would really be a ballet.

TC: Do you feel that your immersion in this violent world as a kid shaped these themes in your drawing and moved you in that direction?

KIRBY: Well, it helped me live. It helped me stay alive.

TC: I mean, do you think it affected the way you drew and the way you —

KIRBY: Oh, yes. You can judge it for yourself. You can see my early books on *Captain America*. I had to draw the things I knew. In one fight scene, I recognized my uncle. I'd subconsciously drawn my uncle, and I didn't know it until I took

Panel from "Street Code," 1983.

THE COMICS JOURNAL LIBRARY: JACK KIRBY

the page home. So I was drawing reality, and if you look through all my drawings, you'll see reality. When I began to grow older, I grew less ... You don't really grow less belligerent.

TCJ: [Laughing] Right.

KIRBY: It stays inside you, somehow, and it always has its uses.

TCJ: What kind of recreational activities did you engage in as a kid? I mean, did you play stickball, for instance?

KIRBY: Yes, I played everything. I played stickball. I played baseball. I played left end on my high school team.

TCJ: What was your relationship with your parents like?

KIRBY: My parents loved me. My father used to carry me around on his shoulders. I know my father loved me. All families love their children, and we were good boys.

TCJ: Did you enjoy school? Were you a good student?

TCJ: What actually started you drawing? What gave you the idea you could draw?

KIRBY: I wanted to. I felt that I could. I'd been drawing all along because I felt anybody could do that. All human beings have the capability of doing what they want, what they're attracted to.

TCJ: I think at the age of 14 you enrolled at the Pratt Institute.

KIRBY: Yes, I did.

TCJ: Can you tell me how you went about doing that?

KIRBY: I went to the Pratt Institute, but I didn't go there for long. I didn't like places with rules.

TCJ: How long did you go to Pratt?

KIRBY: I went to Pratt a week. [Laughter] I wasn't the kind of student that Pratt was looking for. They wanted patient people who would work on something forever. I didn't want to work on any project forever. I intended to get things done. I did the best drawing I could, and it was very adequate — it had viability, it had

flexibility. The people in the art class kind of sympathized with me, and yet they couldn't abandon their own outlook toward art.

TCJ: Would you say the Pratt Institute represented a fine-art outlook?

KIRBY: Yes. It was a fine-art outlook, it was a formal outlook, and it was a respected outlook. I respected it, too. I had very high respect for the Pratt Institute, but I thought that I had done my best, and that was not their version of the best.

TCJ: So, after Pratt you taught yourself how to draw.

KIRBY: I taught myself how to draw, and I soon found out it was what I really wanted to do. I didn't think I was going to create any great masterpieces like Rembrandt or Gauguin. I thought comics was a



Early '30s Kirby cartoon, signed "Jack Kirby."

KIRBY: I was a good student in the subjects that I wanted to be good in. The curriculum in my section was excellent. I have a good sense of history.

TCJ: Now, can you tell me what your family life was like? Were you close?

KIRBY: My family life was close. They were a wonderful family.

TCJ: I understand that as a kid you were something of a bookworm.

KIRBY: Yes.

TCJ: How did you come to be interested in reading in such a tough neighborhood?

KIRBY: I came out of school one day, and there was this pulp magazine. It was a rainy day, and it was floating toward the sewer in the gutter. So I pick up this pulp magazine, and it's *Wonder Stories*, and it's got a rocket ship on the cover, and I'd never seen a rocket ship. I said, "What the heck is that?" I took it home and hid it under the pillow so nobody should know I was reading it. And, of course, if the fellows caught me reading it or doing anything academic outside of school ...

TCJ: Now, you read pulps. Did you also read newspaper strips?

KIRBY: Yes, I did. I loved the newspaper strips. I loved *Barney Google*. I think that's what brought me into journalism. The comics are so large and colorful. The pages are extremely large, and I used to love that. And *Prince Valiant*, of course — it was astonishing to see this beautiful illustration in the newspaper, and it was so different from the ordinary comic.

a common form of art and strictly American in my estimation, because America was the home of the common man, and show me the common man that can't do a comic. So comics is an American form of art that anyone can do with a pencil and paper.

TCJ: It's a democratic art.

KIRBY: It's a democratic art. It's not a formal art. I feel a fine artist is never through with his work, because it's never perfect to him.

TCJ: Don't you think you achieved a sort of perfection in your own work?

KIRBY: Yes, I did. I achieved perfection, my type of perfection — visual storytelling. Storytelling was my style. I was an artist, but not a self-proclaimed great artist, just a common man who was working in a form of art which is now universal. I get letters from people of my own status.

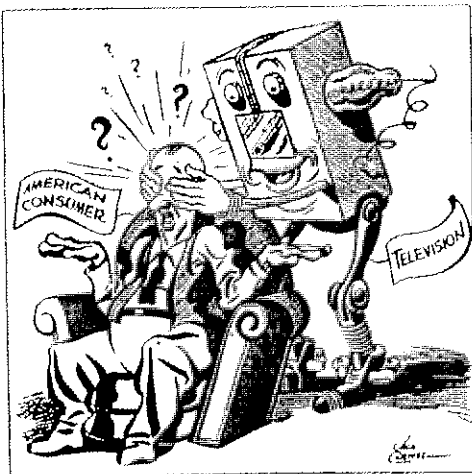
TCJ: How did you teach yourself how to draw? Did you use books?

KIRBY: I used any method I could, really.

TCJ: Did you go outside and sketch from life? I'm trying to find out how you actually learned to draw, how you learned anatomy.

KIRBY: My anatomy was self-taught. I feel everybody has that ability. I drew instinctively. Mine was an instinctive style.

TCJ: Did you ever in your life think of taking any formal art training?



KIRBY: No. I tell young people that it's advantageous to study art ...

TCK: Did you learn anatomy. Where muscles are, how they connect, and so on?

KIRBY: I searched it out, and I made my own muscles, and I made my figures as powerful as I could.

TCK: How did you learn perspective?

KIRBY: You learn perspective ... well, if you're brought up in the city, if it doesn't look right you'll know it. But, if you grow up in a city and see the city, you'll get a city as it really is with all the detail that you remember. If you're drawing a western town, you can duplicate that western town from instinct alone. Some artists may take it from other illustrations or duplicate what you've drawn, but it will never have that gut reality that's instinctive in the artist.

TCK: What artists did you admire in your teen years?

KIRBY: I admired them all. I admired anybody who could make a buck with his drawing. [Laughter]

TCK: You must have had an eye for quality work.

KIRBY: I like quality work. Comics like Prince Valiant. I loved Milton Caniff and his work. Everybody did. If a man was good, he was universally liked.

TCK: Were you a very independent personality as a teen-ager?

KIRBY: Yes, I was.

TCK: Where do you think you got that? Was that from your father?

KIRBY: No, just growing up on the Lower East Side.

TCK: Did you see a lot of movies when you were a kid?

KIRBY: Yes. I was a movie person. I think it was one of the reasons I drew comics. They galvanized me. When Superman came out, it galvanized the entire industry. It's just part of the American scene. Superman is going to live forever. They'll be reading Superman in the next century when you and I are gone. I felt in that respect I was doing the same thing. I wanted to be known. I wasn't going to sell a comic that was going to die quickly.

TCK: I understand you got a job with a small newspaper syndicate when you were 18.

KIRBY: [Lincoln] Newspaper Features.

TCK: What were you doing for them?

KIRBY: I was doing editorials. I did *Your Health Comes First*. I did another daily comic. On each comic strip I put a different name. I didn't want to be in any particular environment, I wanted to be an all-around American. I kept Kirby. My mother gave me hell. My father gave me hell. My family disowned me.

TCK: You actually changed your name to Kirby?

KIRBY: When I began doing the strips.

TCK: Why exactly did you change your name?

KIRBY: I wanted to be an American. My name is Kurtzberg.

TCK: Why didn't you think Kurtzberg was an acceptable American name?

KIRBY: I felt if you wanted to have a great name, it would be Farnsworth, right? Or Stillweather. I felt Jack Kirby was close to my real name.

TCK: You're Jewish. Was there anti-Semitism back then?

KIRBY: Yes. A lot of it. They were confrontational days, when people of different backgrounds had to live together. And it hasn't changed. There's anti-Semitism today.

TCK: Were you an Orthodox Jew?

KIRBY: My father was Conservative. We were never Orthodox, but we were Conservative. I went to Hebrew school. It was above a livery stable, the Hebrew school. Until the day I die I'll never forget that wonderful table we used to sit at. Hebrew school was a rough place. An airplane flew over one day and I ran over to the window and everyone was pushing and shoving each other, and some guy really shoved me out of the way --- I knocked him clean out.

TCK: How old were you?

KIRBY: I was about 12. I wasn't bar mitzvah yet. They had to pick him up. But, I was so eager. That was such an innovation, to hear the sound of the motor of an airplane flying overhead. I just had to get there in front. I was attracted by everything that seemed to be new and advanced. I saw *The Time Machine*.

TCK: Did you see Chaplin's films?

KIRBY: Yes, I saw the Chaplin comedies, Buster Keaton. I saw the Marx brothers on a stage when they weren't even in the movies.

TCK: Was this on vaudeville?

KIRBY: This would be vaudeville. I'd go to the Academy of Music on 14th Street in New York. It might still be there for all I know. The Marx brothers came on stage and they did their act. I saw them in the movies. I loved the Marx brothers. I wanted to go to California and my mother said, "No, you can't go to California." Of course, standards were different in those days --- the mother was unavailable.

Left: Late '30s editorial cartoon, signed "Jack Curtis."

Below: A *Your Health Comes First* strip from the late '30s, also signed "Jack Curtis."

PRE-WAR CAREER

TCK: You worked as an assistant to Max Fleischer.

KIRBY: Yes. I was in the Fleischer studio.

TCK: How did that come about?

KIRBY: I applied for it, and I was never really turned down for anything. I just did things as well as I could, and I was accepted. Then I went to work with the Fleischer brothers, and they did animation. It was an assembly line. In order to draw a figure taking a full step, I would draw six pictures



THE COMICS JOURNAL LIBRARY JACK KIRBY

THE DIARY OF DR. HAYWARD by Curt Davis



A The Diary of Dr. Hayward strip from the late 1930s, signed "Curt Davis."

work for animation houses [now] but in an individual sense. I conceive a story, I conceive characters, everybody else [does] the animation.

TCH: You must have visited your father's factory?

KIRBY: Never. But I did see other factories.

TCH: What factory did your father work in?

KIRBY: It was a garment factory.

TCH: It's funny, my father is roughly your age and he grew up in New York, too. You both grew up in New York at the same time.

KIRBY: Yes, and we might have been drafted together. That was a horrible thing — to be drafted — because you began to meet people that you didn't like. You found yourself in trucks with people from different parts of the country.

TCH: You were drafted?

KIRBY: I was drafted.

TCH: What year would that have been?

ROZ KIRBY: (to Jack) We were married in '42, and you were drafted next year, '43.

KIRBY: Middle of '43. Yeah, because I took basic training down in Georgia at that time. After taking basic training, I found myself on the bus going to Boston to a POE — port of embarkation. Who's sitting next to me in the bus but Mort

and then pass it along to some other fellow. Then he would make the other step. This long table — lots of people working at that table. It was a factory in a sense, like my father's factory. They were manufacturing pictures.

TCH: You didn't like that?

KIRBY: I didn't like that. I wanted to do my own.

TCH: How long did you work at the Fleischer studios?

KIRBY: Not very long. I'm an individualist. I always felt that I wanted to do what I wanted to do.

TCH: You were an in-betweener. Can you tell me what an in-betweener did?

KIRBY: An in-betweener pencilled in the action in between a full step. In other words, the man before you would begin knowing the full step. It might take three or four pictures. The in-betweener would draw the in-between steps. He would draw the segment of taking that step. Animation was done in this type of way. The right way. It still is the right way in many places. I

Weisinger of DC.

TCH: Did you know him at the time?

KIRBY: I knew Mort very well. I knew everybody at DC.

TCH: Now, you were drafted when you were 26. Can you describe your comic-book career prior to your being drafted?

KIRBY: I was doing very well. I was doing *Captain America*.

TCH: You went from the Fleischer studio to where?

KIRBY: I went from Lincoln to Fleischer. From Fleischer I had to get out in a hurry because I couldn't take that kind of thing. I began to see the first comic books appear. I can remember them hanging from the newsstands.

TCH: I think you worked for Victor Fox. Would that have been the next place you worked?

KIRBY: Victor Fox was another syndicated house.

TCH: What did you do for Victor Fox?

KIRBY: I did comic strips.

TCH: You worked on something called *Blue Beetle*. I believe.

KIRBY: Yes, I did *Blue Beetle* and a thing called *Scooby the Scolding*. I had already met Joe Simon.

TCH: And Abdul Jones.

KIRBY: Yes. I did a variety of strips for small syndicates.

TCH: Can you explain how you got these jobs?

KIRBY: I just went up and applied for them and got them.

TCH: Just knocked on doors?

KIRBY: Yes.

TCH: Did you work in their studio?

KIRBY: Yes. It would be like a loft really. They were large lofts, plenty of space.

TCH: How many people would be working in one of these places? Would it be a whole row of artists?

KIRBY: Yes. Maybe five or six people, sometimes more. It depended on how big a company it was and who the artists were. They were beginning to discover comics just like we were except they were exploring the business end of comics. Now the business end of comics is an entirely different type of thing.

TCH: Was this a nine-to-five job?

KIRBY: Yes.

TCH: Were you paid per piece or per hour?

KIRBY: I was paid per week. A flat weekly rate.

TCH: And you were expected to turn out an adequate number of pages?

KIRBY: Yes. They wanted a certain amount of pages so they could pass them to the next fellow.

TCH: Tell me if I'm wrong: The studio created these comics and then sold them as a package to publishers who requested them from the studio.

KIRBY: Yes. Sometimes, though, they'd have their own magazines like *Jumbo*, (which) they'd publish in association with others.

TCH: When you were working for studios, would you create things out of whole cloth or were you given specific assignments?

KIRBY: We created things out of whole cloth. I was creating things all the time. Joe spent a lot of time with the Goodmans, who owned —

TCH: Actually, I meant when you were working in a studio.

KIRBY: Oh. Before Joe, I was improvising my own material all the time.

TCH: The studios were owned by Victor Fox and Eisner and Iger — were these the people?

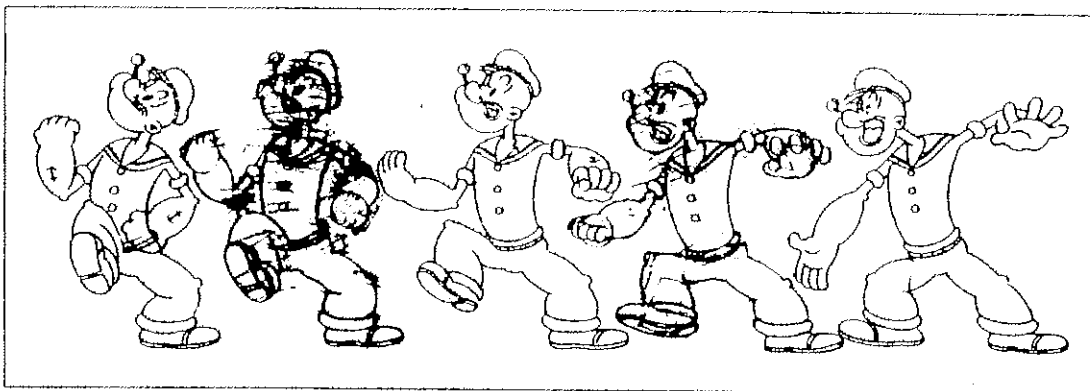
KIRBY: These were the business people.

TCH: And these were the people you dealt with directly?

KIRBY: Yes. I dealt directly with them. They told me what they wanted done, gave me space in which to work.

TCH: What was your attitude to comics like when you were working in the studios?

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[[An in-between penciled in the action in between a full step.]]

KIRBY: I felt the comics grew because they became the common man's literature, the common man's art, the common man's publishing.

TCH: What was working in a studio like?

KIRBY: Well, the Eisner-Iger studio — they were very energetic people, they were fine business people, making phone calls all over the place to people I'd never heard of. They were running a business. They wanted things done a certain way. Victor Fox was a character. He'd look up at the ceiling with a big cigar, this little fellow, very broad, going back and forth with his hands behind his back saying, "I'm the King of the Comics! I'm the King of the Comics!" and we would watch him, and of course we would smile because he was a genuine type. You'd see his type in a movie, and you'd recognize him.

TCH: How old a man was he at that time?

KIRBY: At that time, he would have been in his 40s.

TCH: Do you know what he did before that, where he came from?

KIRBY: No, I don't.

TCH: He was supposed to be something of a crook. Did you ever have any bad experiences with Fox?

KIRBY: No. I don't think Fox sharked any of the people who worked with me. We were small fish to Fox. He was a man with big ambitions. I think he moved to Canada, never heard from again. Maybe he wanted to become king of Canada and never made it.

TCH: What was he like to work under as a boss?

KIRBY: He was very good to work for as a boss. Fox never bothered you. Fox liked production. We turned out the amount of pages he wanted, and he'd publish them. Like most of the fellows, we got along fine. I couldn't picture myself liking a guy like Fox, but I did. I genuinely liked Victor Fox.

TCH: Did you ever see Fox socially?

KIRBY: No, I never saw Fox socially. You couldn't, there was too big a gap. Fox would never mingle with a guy like me. Like I said, Fox was ambitious.

TCH: What was working for Eisner and Iger like?

KIRBY: Eisner and Iger were energetic, efficient and they weren't out to be friendly; they were out to produce. Eventually, we all became personal friends. It was time for thorough professionals. Eisner and Iger wanted to expand like everybody else. They were in business — I was part of that business and I had to produce for them. So I did my best to produce.

TCH: Did you deal directly with Iger or Eisner or both?

KIRBY: I dealt more with Eisner.

TCH: How did you hook up with Joe Simon?

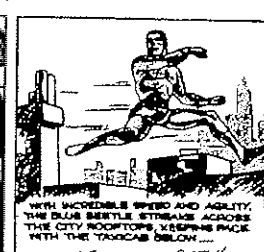
KIRBY: Going up to these offices we'd meet up, a lot of us also going to do business with these people. I had never met a guy like Joe. I had never met a guy from Syracuse, N.Y. I'd never met a guy who wasn't a New Yorker. Joe looked like a politician. Joe was an impressive guy. He still is. He got square deals for us, where in the past to get a square deal was an unknown quantity. Comics as a business became a real thing for all of us. I never knew anything about living with

Kirby's in-between drawings of Popeye are positions two and four.

The Blue Beetle

RELEASE MONDAY, JANUARY 15, 1940
THE ROOFTOP SHADOW

by Charles Nicholas



A Kirby dream
Blue Beetle strip
from 1940.

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SOCKO THE SEADOG



By Teddy

ABDUL JONES



By Ted Grey

Socko the Seadog and Abdul Jones strips, by "Teddy" and "Ted Grey," from the late 1930s.

lawyers, but if you don't live with a lawyer, you're going to be on the bottom of the pile.

TG: When you hooked up with Joe Simon, did you and he create —

KIRBY: Yes, we created jointly.

TG: Now, when you did this, you apparently weren't aware of the financial ramifications — that people were going to make a lot of money on these things.

KIRBY: Oh, we were aware of it, but I didn't know how to do business. I didn't know where to begin to do business. I was a kid from the Lower East Side who'd never seen a lawyer, who'd never done business. I was from a family that, like millions of others, where doing business was concerned I was completely naive.

TG: Had you ever thought of going to the publishers and saying, "We think this work is worth more than you're paying us to produce it?"

KIRBY: We didn't know the value of it because Joe got the sales figures. I began to learn about sales figures. Comics were new and spreading very fast. I was just getting paid a page rate.

TG: Were you aware that the companies were making a lot of money on these, and you were just getting a fixed page rate?

KIRBY: Yes. I accepted that fact because I was bringing in more money. Don't get me wrong — the more money the books made, the more money I received, and I was feeling great. My purpose was what my father's purpose was; to make a living and to have a family. I was going to do the right thing. My dream to me was to have money to support it and to live in the kind of house I liked.

TG: Did it dawn on you that the publishers you were working for were making a whole lot more money than you were off your work?

KIRBY: I didn't care. I couldn't conceive of what they were doing in those offices. I couldn't conceive of working with accountants. I couldn't conceive of working with salespeople. I couldn't conceive of distribution. I couldn't conceive of it because I couldn't envision it. I've never run a business, I've never run a big business, and comics were growing fast.

TG: Did you resent the publishers?

KIRBY: No, I didn't resent them. In fact, I got along well with them. When I

wanted a little more money, they gave me a little more money.

ROZ KIRBY: They threw you bones.

KIRBY: Yeah, they threw me bones, and the publishers liked me.

TG: I bet.

KIRBY: I got along well with them.

TG: When you and Joe Simon worked together in your studio, was it just the two of you or did you employ other people?

KIRBY: We had a letterer.

TG: Would the companies give you studio scripts, which you would then illustrate?

KIRBY: I never took their scripts. DC would send me scripts, I'd throw them out the window.

TG: Why was that?

KIRBY: I don't like anything that's contrived. I conceive, they contrive. OK?

TG: [Laughter] That's good.

KIRBY: That's why my book sold. Captain America was real. When Captain America

got into a fight with a dozen guys, he could lick those guys, and anybody who read the book can see how he did it.

TG: You only had a letterer working with you in the studio?

KIRBY: Yes, I had a letterer.

TG: Why didn't you hire five more artists and crank up production?

KIRBY: I didn't think that way. We had artists who inked for us and who lettered for us, but I worked on the stories myself.

TG: The business part of Simon and Kirby had been Simon?

KIRBY: Yes, Joe was the business side.

TG: Were you a legal partnership?

KIRBY: Yes, we were a legitimate partnership.

TG: Speaking about the period before World War II when you were working in comics, did you pal around with other artists? What was the social environment like?

KIRBY: We palled around. I knew Mort Meskin very well. All the artists knew each other. I was social with Joe, of course. We were very close.

TG: Were you all obsessed with comics?

KIRBY: Yes, we were obsessed with comics. I remember when I met Roz we went out with Joe and his girlfriend. We were taking them to Times Square, and the crazy thing about it was that there was trouble in the air, and yet the young people didn't give a damn.

TG: Was that around 1940, when you met?

ROZ KIRBY: When I met Jack, he asked me if I wanted to go to his room and see his etchings, and I did. But imagine my surprise when he really did show me etchings! [Laughter]

KIRBY: Let's face it, I was rather naive.

TG: In romance and business. [Laughter]

KIRBY: No, I wasn't naive in romance. [Laughter] My character never changed. She had about five boyfriends, and one was a piano player, and I stood behind him and said, "It would be terrible if the piano lid closed on your fingers. That would be painful wouldn't it?" I said, "You belong in Hollywood, out West, you play too well." And he took the hint.

TG: You were in Brooklyn at this time?

KIRBY: Yes.

TC: When did you move from the Lower East Side to Brooklyn?

KIRBY: I was beginning to make money. Brooklyn was great. Brighton Beach was great.

TC: Was the Simon and Kirby studio in Manhattan?

KIRBY: Yes, it was in Tudor City.

TC: Up to this point what was your social life like?

KIRBY: We'd go to theaters. We'd see movies. We saw Sammy Kay.

TC: Were you a real fan of big band music?

KIRBY: No, not really. But I felt that was the thing to do. I took her horseback riding — a thing I'd never done in my life. I wanted to prove to her that I had a lot of class. I was very sincere. I wanted Rosalind, and I was going to do anything to make her my permanent babe. I brought riding boots and went horseback riding, and I almost fell off a horse.

ROZ KIRBY: He got these horses that were slow —

KIRBY: We got some very bad horses. [Laughter] I never went riding again. I was terrible at it.

TC: Did you go dancing?

KIRBY: Yeah, we danced pretty well. We were average.

ROZ KIRBY: Then he was drafted.

WAR YEARS

KIRBY: I was drafted in the late autumn of '43. I trained in Georgia and there was one pig walking in the middle of the road.

TC: You were in the Army, right?

KIRBY: I was in the combat infantry. I went to Liverpool first. Then they shipped us to Southampton, which is the port of embarkation for Normandy. I got to Normandy ten days after the invasion. All the guys on that landing were still laying there.

TC: Did you arrive on one of those landing crafts?

KIRBY: Yes. I arrived on an LST. When I got there, they were laying in heaps.

TC: What beach did you land on?

KIRBY: Omaha.

TC: Did you think you'd be drafted?

KIRBY: I figured I would, but I didn't know when. I was a married man. That's why I didn't get drafted earlier. The crazy part about it was I got drafted at 480 Lexington Ave. — that's where DC was.

TC: [Laughter] I guess you could say that you were drafted twice.

How did you take Army life?

KIRBY: I didn't like Army life. I didn't like taking orders. I didn't like discipline. I didn't like being yelled at. You'd get ten years for punching a sergeant so I couldn't punch a sergeant.

TC: But you thought about it.

KIRBY: No, I kept my temper. By the time I saw the Germans, I can tell ya', boy, I was fairly happy. I let it all loose.

TC: You came back to the U.S. before the war ended?

KIRBY: I came home from the hospital. I had trench foot — I



Page from Captain America Comics #1, 1941.

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slept out in the snow for six months and if you sleep out in the snow that long ... It was cold mud, cold snow, cold wind. It was cold. So my legs became like elephant legs and there were guys in the ambulance whose legs turned black. My legs were a deep purple. The guys whose legs turned black, they fell

off. I had purple legs! I wondered how they were going to cure purple legs. I was sore as hell. I was miserable, I was miserable.

POST-WAR



Some sketches Kirby made during World War II.

TCH: You just showed me the only strictly autobiographical story I have ever known you to do, "Street Code." Why did you draw that, and why had you never done an autobiographical story before?

KIRBY: This is an experiment for me to test my storytelling abilities. At that time, I told what I knew. To be frank with you, I've never told a lie to anybody. And what I've drawn was always the truth. It might be a very, very fantastic situation. This might be a repeat of what I might have told you before, but I never lie. The situation, even as far out as I can make it, will always have that ...

TCH: Core of truth?

KIRBY: Yes. It will have the sound of truth or the sight of truth. And the characters will always act according to what they are and what they would really do in real life.

ROZ KIRBY: He wants to know why you never did a story about yourself until 1984.

KIRBY: I don't think anybody would have believed it. So many things have happened to me that they'd say it all couldn't have happened to one person. Who would think that I would be walking through French towns or meeting with the SS or French farmers? Whoever thought that I'd be going up to the Bronx? Whoever thought that I'd be going to Brooklyn — I went to Brooklyn and met Roz. That's where I met my wife. Let me say this: Most of the guys who lived on the East Side stayed there. It became part of them. But for some reason that I can't understand, I hated the East Side, I hated being poor. I hated to fight all the time just to enjoy my day. Fighting wasn't the kind of thing that I enjoyed, but I grew to enjoy it because I did it so long.

TCH: One of the things that I was so impressed with in that story was your ability to convey the commonplace. The streets were grubby — you could almost feel the dirt and smell the

garbage — more so in that story than in your superhero work. Did you feel that you could portray a more realistic city in that autobiographical story?

KIRBY: Yes, I could. I would draw that city exactly as it was. I remember it exactly as it was, brick by brick. The garbage in the street and the things floating down to the sewer; the people sitting around a lamppost late at night conversing in their own languages. There would be grandmothers, there would be mothers with kerchiefs on them, and shawls and cheap dresses. There might be a few old men, grandfatherly types. Your father was always playing cards somewhere in some building with a group of men his age. But he would never join your mother sitting around with the neighbors. Every father was his own man. He did what he wanted. If your mother went shopping, your father never went with her. He was away working. I think fathers got used to the way of life where they associated with other men who worked in the factories, and when they came home, that's the kind of surrounding they felt familiar with.

TCH: Now, when you were drawing superheroes like Captain America and the Fantastic Four, did you feel that you couldn't put that kind of living detail in the type of stories you were telling? Could you not concentrate on character as you did in that autobiographical story? KIRBY: There was no time to do it. I had to work fast. I would draw three pages a day, maybe more. I would have to vary the panels, balance the page. I took care of everything on that page — the expressions of the characters, the motivation of the characters — it all ran through my mind. I wrote my own stories. Nobody ever wrote a story for me. I told in every story what was really inside my gut, and it came out that way. My stories began to get noticed because the average reader could associate with them.

TCH: How did you feel about other people inking your work? Would you have preferred to ink yourself, or did you not care after it was penciled?

KIRBY: No, I didn't care. The technical side of it never bothered me. In fact, some of the inkers had a variety of styles, and it kind of pleased me to see my work done in various ink styles. The people who worked in comics were terrific guys. I had a good association with them, and I enjoyed comics for that very reason.

TCH: Let me take up where I left off. Around 1945, when you got back from the war, I believe you renewed your partnership with Joe Simon.

KIRBY: I renewed my partnership with Joe Simon, but Joe didn't want to do comics any more. That period is hazy to me.

TCH: Well, around 1945 I think you did Boys' Ranch. Did you do the romance books with Joe Simon?

KIRBY: Yes. We created the romance field.

TCH: Can you tell me how you came about creating the boys' genre — Boy Commandos, Boys' Ranch?

KIRBY: Essentially, they were inside me. The gang business never leaves you. It was either a gang or a club. In drawing people by the bunches, I would get a variety of people. A lot of the other cartoonists were concentrating on one particular person and making him acceptable to the public whereas I would diversify and do groups.

TCH: Did someone ask you to do that?

KIRBY: No, nobody ever asked me to do anything. Nobody knew what to do. When comics were brand new, nobody knew what kind of comics to make. So you were mostly on your own.

TCH: Did you conceptualize Boys' Ranch and then offer it to a publisher?

ROZ KIRBY: Joe did that.

KIRBY: Yeah. Her memory is sometimes better than mine.

TCH: Did you write Boys' Ranch as well?

KIRBY: Yes. I wrote Boys' Ranch. I always wrote my strips.

TCH: How did you collaborate with Joe Simon? What did you do and what did he do?

KIRBY: Joe did a lot of the business. Had I stayed at Joe's side all the time while Joe operated, we'd have never gotten any pages done. We got an office in Tudor City — I worked in the office with a letterer, Howard Ferguson. When Howard passed away, there was another letterer to replace him (Ben Oda). Joe did a lot of inking, and he worked when he could, but business had to be done with the publisher. Joe is an impressive guy, and he felt that this was his function, and that's how he became good friends with Arnie and Martin Goodman.

We collaborated well. Joe and I got along very well. It was very, very strange for people so different physically to collaborate so closely. Joe is 6' 1", a big guy and quite different than I am. But Joe's deal was really commercial art. That's the field he came from. Joe was a college man. He's got a fine mind. Of course, after we came back after the war, Joe gravitated to commercial art.

TCH: Can you explain how you developed the romance genre?

KIRBY: The romance genre was all around us. There was love-story pulp, and there was love-story sections in the newspapers. There was love stories in the movies. Wherever you went there was love stories! That's how we got our new material, and it suddenly struck me that that's what we haven't done. We haven't done any romance stories! There it was right in front of our eyes hanging from the newsstand. A love story! A romance story! So Joe and I sat down one night and came up with the title, *Young Romance*, and *Young Romance* sold out.

TCH: Would Joe have gone to a publisher and said, "We want to do a romance comic, will you pay us for it?" Or would you actually do the comic and then show it to a publisher?

KIRBY: We did it both ways. We did it as it was feasible. We did it as the situation arose. We did it all the ways you mentioned. We'd go up together, sometimes just one of us. Sometimes, in order to convince the publisher, I'd draw up the presentation page. I'd draw up three or four pages, and then the publisher would get the idea of the kind of thing we were trying to sell. Then we'd either go up together or Joe would say, "Finish up that page, I'll go up and talk to them and you meet me there." I'd meet him there with this finished page and we'd show them what we were trying to accomplish.

TCH: At this point you were still being paid by the page.

KIRBY: Yeah, we had a page rate. Each comics house had a different page rate. There weren't many. Marvel wasn't even in existence — there was Timely, Atlas ...

TCH: National.

KIRBY: National was there. Jack Liebowitz was still the head of the organization. We talked to him. I knew Jack Liebowitz well, but as a young boy, Jack Liebowitz was a fine old man, and he treated me very, very well. If you were to talk to a young fellow, you'd try to be fatherly and friendly, and Jack was like that. I have very fond memories of talking to Mr. Liebowitz, as I called him. I'd show him the work that we're doing and the kind of thing that we'd been doing.

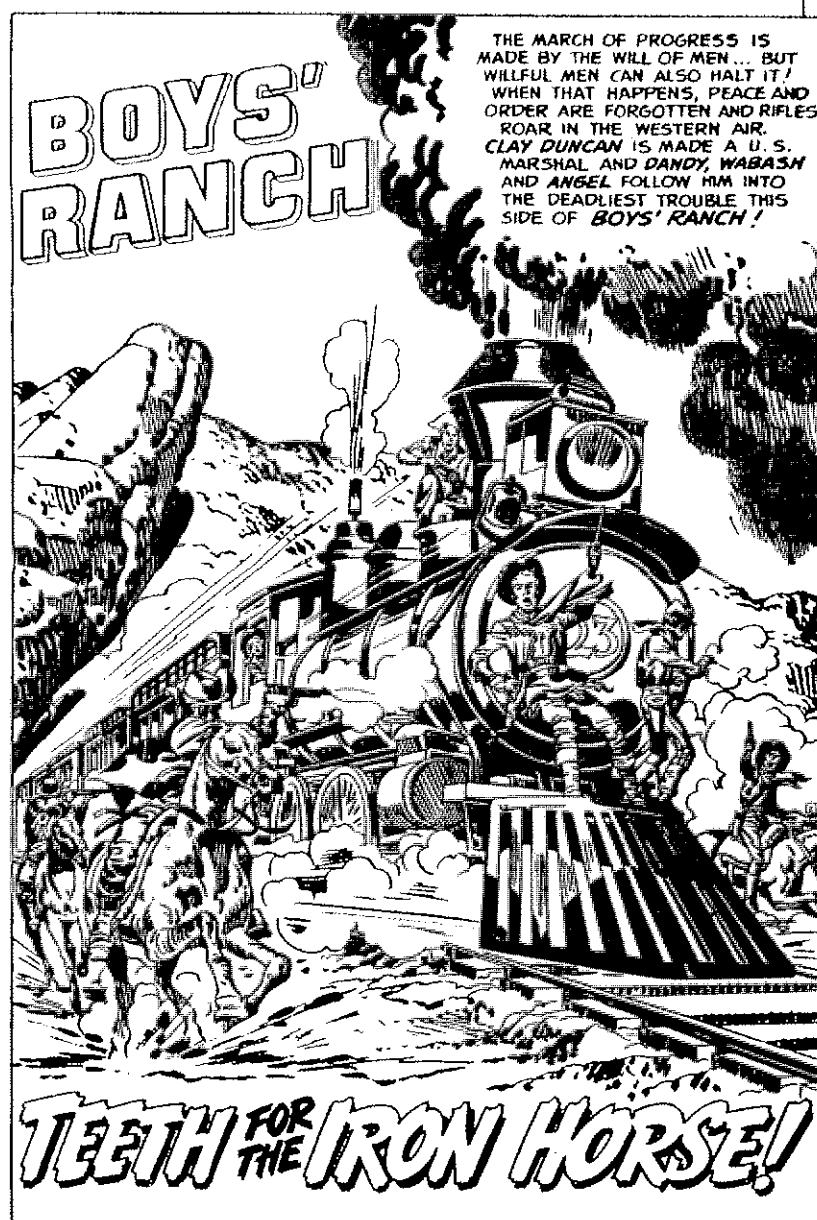
TCH: As you approached the '50s, I believe comics started concentrating on horror.

KIRBY: Yes, we did horror, we did Westerns.

TCH: Did you ever do horror? I know you did romance ...

KIRBY: I did a couple of monster stories.

TCH: Wasn't that in the late '50s? In the late '40s, I don't think you ever did



Splash page from *Boys' Ranch* #6, 1951.

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Panel from Soul Love, an unpublished 1970s Kirby romance comic.

horror. You did Westerns and romance.

KIRBY: Yes. We did Westerns and romance and gangster stories.

TCH: Do you remember why you didn't get into horror? Was it that you didn't have an affinity for horror?

KIRBY: No, I didn't have an affinity for horror. But I knew that, commercially, it was viable. That's why we both finally did it.

TCH: You did monsters which isn't really quite the same.

KIRBY: No, we didn't do horror in the sense of haunted houses or people with masks the way you might see them today; something lurking in an anteroom. Our stories were more like peasants sitting around a fire. We had the *The Strange World of Your Dreams*. Ours didn't run to bloody horror. Ours ran to weirdness. We began to interpret dreams.

Remember, Joe and I were wholesome characters. We weren't guys that were bent

on the weird and the bizarre. We were the kind of guys who wouldn't offend our mother, who wouldn't offend anyone in your family, and certainly not the reader. So we knew that we had to depart from adventure and that there were other ways to go, and we came up with *The Strange World of Your Dreams*.

TCH: [Holding comic] *Strange World of Your Dreams* — this is published by Prize.

KIRBY: That was our own company. [Kirby may be confusing Prize Publications with Simon and Kirby's company Mainline here.]

TCH: Can you explain how you started your own company — was it mostly for Simon?

KIRBY: I think it started with the romance stuff. It was mostly Joe because he was more knowledgeable about lawyers and copyrights and things like that.

TCH: Where did you get the capital? Did

you actually publish them?

KIRBY: Yes, we actually published them. The whole trouble was we were undercapitalized. We published for a little while, but we didn't get many issues out.

TCH: Did Joe handle all the business aspects such as distribution?

KIRBY: We both did, and that's how I began to learn about it. But Joe would handle it a lot more adeptly than I did.

TCH: Was this Joe's idea to start the company?

KIRBY: Both of us decided if the other publishers could make money at it, why were we feeding them? And we were right. We had good stuff, and we were innovative, and why not do it for ourselves as well as for the publishers.

TCH: How long did the company last?

KIRBY: Not too long. A couple of issues.

TCH: I think you published five titles.

KIRBY: Something like that.

TCH: Why do you think the company failed?

KIRBY: We were undercapitalized, and we just couldn't continue. We ran into a lot of bad luck. Wertham gave all comics bad press, so it cut your audience down. People were afraid to be seen with a comic lest they be labeled as less intellectual than the next fellow who was reading deep books.

TCH: In this comic, *Strange World of Your Dreams*, there's a story that says "For dramatization analysis by Richard Temple." Was there really a Richard Temple?

KIRBY: No, there was no Richard Temple. It was a pen name. We had to manufacture an entire company.

TCH: You apparently hired some people like Mort Meskin, who I see is in here. Did you do the hiring?

KIRBY: We both did. We both did everything. I was in the office, I think, more than Joe. I did a lot of hiring and a lot of business with the other artists. Mort Meskin was a fine artist, and he helped the circulation of the magazine.

TCH: Did you enjoy doing that? Because previously you had just been an artist and now you were —

KIRBY: Yes, I did. Life began to broaden a bit. I was growing, and I was learning how to do business.

TCH: Do you happen to remember why you did *The Strange World of Your Dreams*?

KIRBY: First of all, nobody had that title. You got to remember that in the conventional world that we lived in, raw horror would never have been accepted. We might not have gotten on the newsstands. The newsstand was still selling magazines being put out by Dell, which was a fine company, but they were all conventional. We had to be within that circle just for prestige's sake. They were all prestigious companies. So to gain that same prestige, we printed stories within that same framework. Had we done straight horror at that time, it would have been an adolescent move. Let me put it that way.

TCH: Do you remember specifically how you went under?

KIRBY: Things just went bad. They just went bad. You come to a point where you say, "We can't lose any more. Let's go back to making some money."

TCH: You published romance, Western, war and you also published a crime comic.

KIRBY: Gangsters were a big thing then.

TCH: Did you write a lot of these?

KIRBY: I wrote most of them.

TCH: Now, Jack, did you write the story, "I Was a Come-On Girl for Broken Bones, Inc.?"

KIRBY: Yes, I did. [Laughter]

TCH: Since you worked for yourself, you didn't have to give the art to a publisher. Do you have any idea what happened to all the original art?



Young Romance #1 cover, 1947.

KIRBY: God, I don't know.

ROZ KIRBY: We had a lot of the romance pages and Joe had some romance. And I gave pages back to someone to return back to the authors.

TCJ: I understand you actually originated a book called *My Date*.

KIRBY: Yes. *My Date* was the open door to the romance books. It was then that it hit us. After we published *My Date*, it suddenly occurred to me that we were missing the big thing. Romance was making all the money. *My Date* was more of a teen-age book — young people dating girls, dropping girls, gaining girls.

TCJ: You did that for Hillman.

KIRBY: Yes.

TCJ: Who was Hillman?

KIRBY: Hillman was another publishing outfit, and if I remember correctly, we did quite a few things for them.

ROZ KIRBY: Something about an alligator?

KIRBY: Something the alligator, about a real alligator. It was a funny alligator. I forget what the heck his name was [*Lockjaw the Alligator*]. It was a satirical cartoon about Charlie Chaplin as an alligator.

TCJ: You did that for Hillman?

KIRBY: I think it was for Hillman.

TCJ: What was Crestwood Publishing?

KIRBY: Crestwood was a publishing house that Joe and I worked for. Remember, comics were beginning to make a lot of money, and there were new publishing houses being born, and a lot of them faded away, like Victor Fox.

TCJ: Were there better or worse companies to work for, or were they all pretty much the same?

KIRBY: The idea was to make as much money as you could, and we tried to work for the companies that were paying the most. Of course, Joe and I felt that the way to make the most money was to put out your own books, and we tried that but we didn't have the capital to sustain them, although we had very good titles and very good stories. But you still had to pay the piper — distributors and what not.

TCJ: I understand you started your own company called Mainline Comics in 1954.

KIRBY: Yes, we did.

TCJ: What was *American Boys' Comics*? [*Looking at comic*]

KIRBY: Yeah, I did that with Joe.

TCJ: This says "Simon and Kirby, editors and artists," and the address is 1790 Broadway. But the cover says Prize Publications —

ROZ KIRBY: A lot of them used different names.

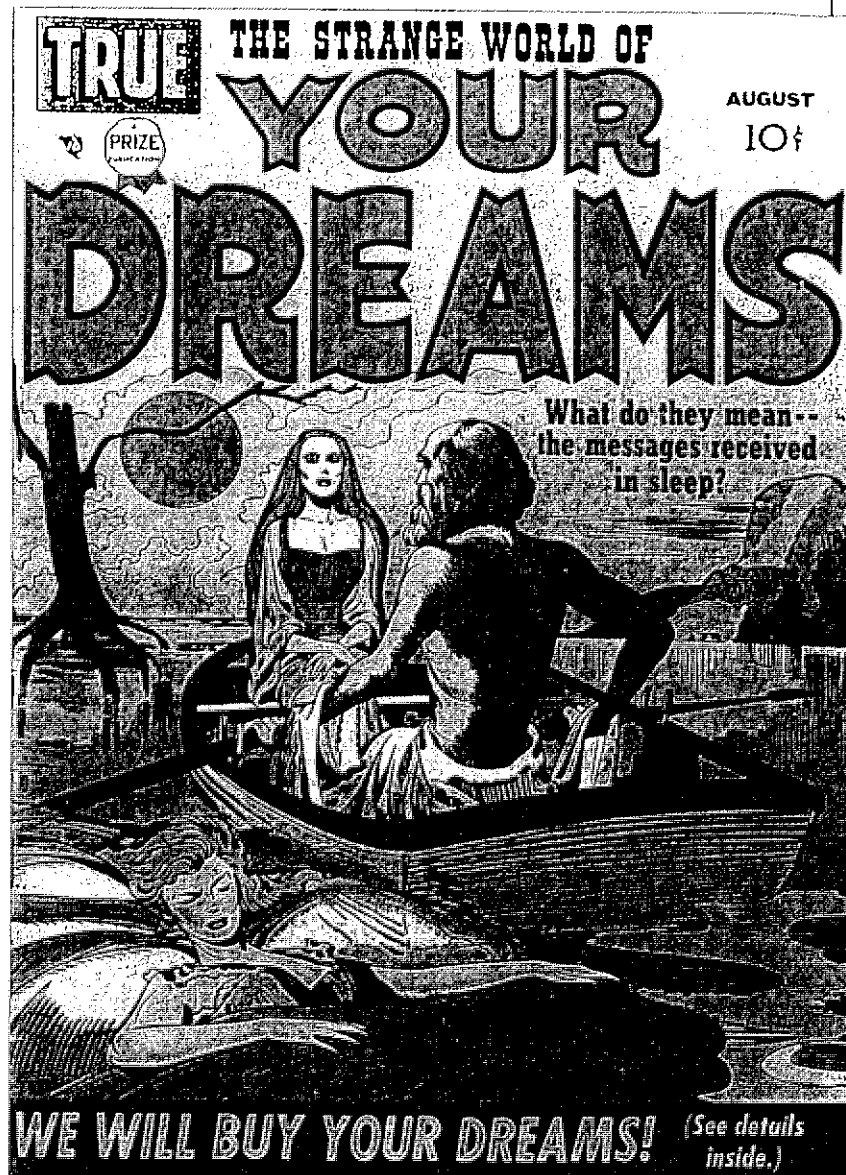
KIRBY: Yeah, that was another company. Most of them faded. They also had tax problems, things like that. They would break their companies into four or five segments.

TCJ: How did the public backlash against comics in the early '50s affect you?

KIRBY: It didn't affect me at all. I was a poor boy making money.

TCJ: What were your feelings about that at the time?

KIRBY: I ignored them. I knew the stuff I was doing was done well, and that I could write as well as any other guy. And I did. I knew that Joe was a good businessman. I was fairly good in business. I was growing up with Joe. Remember, Joe was older, and Joe knew a lot more tricks than I did. So I began to learn the tricks of the business.



The Strange World of Your Dreams #1 cover, 1952.

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TCJ: Were you worried that the comic book industry might collapse because of all this? Was that a concern?

KIRBY: Yes, it was a concern. In fact, it was a concern to all the publishers. Remember that comic books didn't enjoy the same prestige as, say, *Collier* magazine or *The Saturday Evening Post*. In the '50s, if you went to a newsstand and bought a *Saturday Evening Post*, they'd say, "There goes a good American." If you bought a comic book — "That guy, he shoots pool." Of course, Dr. Werthman didn't help any. We got very bad press. Comic books weren't considered — well, it's like trash TV is today. Trash TV will probably reach a point where it's very acceptable.

Black Magic #29
cover, 1954.



ROY KIRBY: That's when you went over to "Classic Comics." [Classics Illustrated]

KIRBY: Yeah. Joe and I split up. I did "Classic Comics," and they didn't like the way I folded Cleopatra's skirt. It was run by perfectionists, and I was not the guy to work for perfectionists, so I left soon after. I couldn't be that fussy or that perfect with my figures or my costumes. I felt that the story was very, very important, and all of it had to mesh to make any sales.

TCJ: How did you feel about the Senate Subcommittee hearings? Did you think that was a witch-hunt, or did you think there was any validity to the public's concern?

KIRBY: I didn't feel one way or another about it. I was only hoping that it would come out well enough to continue comics, that it wouldn't damage comics in any way, so I could continue working. I was a young man. I was still growing out of the East Side. The only real politics I knew was that if a guy liked Hitler, I'd beat the stuffing out of him, and that would be it.

TCJ: Were you very political?

KIRBY: I wasn't then. I was very concerned with comics. I'm political now. I knew this much — that everybody voted Democrat down my way. If you were poor, you voted Democrat, and if you were rich, you voted Republican.

TCJ: How did you feel about communism then?

KIRBY: Oh, communism! That was a burning issue. It was an outrageous issue. To be termed a communist would damage your whole family, damage your whole world — your friends wouldn't talk to you. I'm talking about other people — because I wouldn't go near the stuff. Sure, I was against the Reds. I became a witch-hunter. My enemies were the commies — I called them commies.

TCJ: What was it about communism that you didn't like?

KIRBY: Well, it was a radical concept to me. Like any other American, I wasn't sophisticated enough to study all its facets. All I knew about it was, it was foreign to democracy. And here I was, I had been fighting for democracy and always aware of two political parties and brought up in that kind of atmosphere. Anything radical was dangerous to me, as it was to the average American. Nobody knew where a thing like that would lead and we were always afraid of chaos. So communism became the doorway to chaos, and the doorway to chaos was the doorway to evil. Your family might be hurt. Your friends might be hurt. You didn't want to see a thing like that.

TCJ: How did you like McCarthy?

KIRBY: I didn't like McCarthy. I didn't like his methods. I liked this other fellow — he was a gray-haired man from Maine, I believe. He sat opposite McCarthy and challenged him. Walsh was his name.

TCJ: Was he the one who asked McCarthy if he had no shame?

KIRBY: Yes. He sounded logical to me, more temperate. You didn't feel like the storm troopers were going to knock on your door the next day when you listened to this guy. When you listened to McCarthy, you knew they were going to drag you away, or your parents. McCarthy sounded like a threat, and if you didn't fit certain specifications as an American — he laid down the specifications, he laid down the rules. That's what put the fear into everybody, because all of us are afraid that we're not going to fit certain rules. McCarthy put the fear of the devil into the entire public. When Walsh began to talk, he began to make sense. He talked not exactly like a statesman but a rational human being. McCarthy was a hunter. McCarthy didn't care who he shot in the woods. But he was getting prestige. He wanted something, and he was going to get it any way he could even if he cut you down. Walsh wasn't like that at all. Walsh was a man who discussed issues and who discussed McCarthy's demeanor. Walsh was a guy who threw cold water on McCarthy, and reminded him he was just a politician with just the ambitions of a politician, and he was never going to be a Hitler.

TCJ: In 1954, you created Fighting American.



KIRBY: Yes. *Fighting American* was the first attempt at satire in comics. It was a satire of *Captain America*. It was very, very funny. I still get calls on it today from people who pick it up on occasion, and it's a genuine laugh.

TC: Did you enjoy doing that?

KIRBY: Yes, I did. I like a good time like anybody else. It was my try at satire. I feel that I'm an intelligent person; I can handle it correctly. And I did. I felt I knew satire, and that's how it came out. That's how I got Doubleheader. I got Uncle Samurai out of that, and I got a Hungarian called Count Yuscha Liffso. It was a period when I really enjoyed doing the comics.

TC: I think *Mainline* comics lasted two years from '54 to '56.

KIRBY: Yes. Like I say, we were undercapitalized. Although we made money, we didn't make enough money.

TC: That period was especially bad for comics. So you and Joe must have broken up around '56.

KIRBY: Around '56. In fact, the other companies were having trouble too. But they could sustain themselves. DC could sustain themselves because of their classic stuff. And Marvel could sustain itself.

TC: Then you collaborated with Wally Wood on a newspaper strip called *Sky Masters*.

KIRBY: *Sky Masters* was a daily.

ROZ KIRBY: Everyone makes this mistake. Wally Wood had nothing to do with the collaboration.

KIRBY: It wasn't Wally Wood. I collaborated with two guys --- the Wood brothers.

TC: Wally Wood had nothing to do with it?

KIRBY: He had nothing to do with it. The Wood brothers lived in New Jersey. I couldn't reach the Wood brothers --- they said, "Send it to our mother and she'll forward it to us." And that's how we did business. Strangely enough, the strip came out very well. But the Wood brothers kind of broke things up.

TC: How did you meet the Wood brothers?

KIRBY: We'd meet up at publishers' offices, places where I would hold discussions. We had 300 papers.

ROZ KIRBY: The reason the strip didn't last is because the Wood brothers kept disappearing.

KIRBY: I couldn't reach the Wood brothers. I had to send them postcards. I had to keep in touch with their mother. These guys were eccentric.

ROZ KIRBY: One got in trouble with the law.

TC: Did you really read the Wood brothers?

KIRBY: I needed the Wood brothers for the syndicate. That's how we began at the syndicate. My trouble was that I would have to explain to the newspaper syndicate what happened to the Wood brothers. [Laughter]

TC: Didn't Wally Wood ink it?

KIRBY: Yeah, he inked a few weeks of them. [Wood inked the strip for at least ten months.]

TC: Was Wally Wood related to the Wood brothers?

KIRBY: No. I began to think everyone was named Wood.

TC: In your entry in *The Encyclopedia of Comics*, it refers to Dick, Dave, and Wally Wood, which gives the impression ---

KIRBY: No. Dick and Dave were the Wood brothers. They were extremely eccentric, so doing business with them was very rough. It was one of the reasons that the strip didn't succeed. The strip was very, very good. It was accepted by 300 newspapers which was a lot of papers. [Looking at a strip] As you can see, I did the moonwalk two years before NASA sent these guys to the moon. I did it in a serious vein. They wore white coveralls over them, but this is what they wore underneath. So I did it correctly. Of course, you can see Wally Wood's influence.

TC: Who colored this? It's really nice.

KIRBY: I did.

ROZ KIRBY: Jack likes to color. [Looking at another piece] I inked that.

TC: You did?

KIRBY: Yeah. She inked it. She's very good. Roz is one of the finer inkers in the field. [Laughter]

TC: Did you enjoy working on a daily strip?

Panels from
Fighting American
#6, 1955.